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Book Review: A History of the College of Charleston

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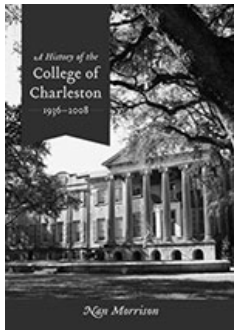
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BOOK REVIEWS



Morrison, Nan. *A History of the College of Charleston*. Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 2011. 289 p. ISBN 978-1-6111-7001-6. \$34.95

There have been numerous other books written about the College of Charleston, the most notable of which are *A History of the College of Charleston, Founded 1770* by J H Easterby and *College of Charleston* by Ileana and Katina P Strauch. Easterby's book covers the College's history from 1770-1935; Morrison concludes Easterby's work by describing the College's history from 1936-2008. The Strauchs' history is light overview of the College's entire history, with over 200 illustrations and a focus on student life. In contrast, this new book by Morrison is a scholarly work that focuses on the College's administration (both its successes and mistakes). Morrison is well qualified to write this book, as both a renowned faculty member at the College for almost 40 years and as one of the College's first female faculty members.

The book opens with a brief introduction that outlines the College's history from its founding in 1837 to the present day. Morrison refers the reader to Easterby's

book for a full account of the College's history prior to 1937, but this short note may escape the reader who will then be puzzled by this book's seemingly random start date. Each chapter title refers to the primary College president for the stated era (for example, "The end of the Randolph era: 1836-1945"). The chapter begins with a summary of events leading up to this era, gives a summary of this chapter, and finally enters a narrative description of the period. This narrative includes in equal parts description of the campus administration and student life. Morrison provides ample endnotes citing her extensive sources. Those sources are outlined in her bibliography, which is in turn followed by an index of topics and personal names.

The reader is left with the overwhelming sense that story of the College of Charleston is primarily that of real estate. Since the College is located in the heart of Charleston, space for new buildings and parking is scarce. Battles over and expenditures for real estate were fought throughout the College's history, and Morrison recounts them in such detail that maps would have been extremely useful to those readers (such as myself) unfamiliar with the city. Morrison is fair but unflinching when describing the purchase and use of local real estate by the College. While she does not hesitate to explain how various purchases were poor financial moves made by presidents (in fact, overzealous real estate purchases almost drove the College into bankruptcy), she fairly concedes that the College benefits from those same purchases today.

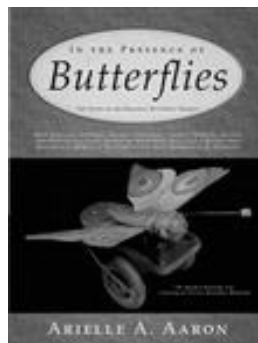
Another town and gown problem faced by the College throughout its history is the school's change from a small commuter

College dedicated to educating the young citizens of Charleston to an internationally renowned center of higher education. Morrison illustrates this identity change with a fair, unbiased perspective as she describes the rationale behind various presidential decisions, and she takes care to describe the response of the academic faculty to these changes. The author is understandably less able to provide an unbiased perspective when recounting the blatantly and unabashedly sexist or racist behavior of many College administrators.

A college without students is nothing, and the same is true for a book about a College's history. No matter how deeply Morrison's prose becomes intertwined with the politics of the school's administration, she always remembers the students. The author describes various aspects of student life, such as the commencement regalia, class satisfaction, and recreational activities. The author also mentions illustrious alumni. While student life does take a narrative back-seat to the political and administrative history of the College, the reader still obtains a solid understanding of the student body's evolution.

In the end, this is an extremely well-researched and well-written book that succeeds in illuminating both the mistakes and successes of the College of Charleston in the past 70-plus years. Though a more extended summary of pre-1937 history for context would have been useful, it remains an easy yet scholarly read. A highly recommended purchase for collections with an emphasis on South Carolina history or the development of higher education and civil rights in the south. It is currently available in hardcover and is not available as an electronic book.

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Aaron, Arielle A. *In the Presence of Butterflies: The Story of the Original Butterfly Project*. Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2011. 192 p. ISBN 978-1-4634-3285-0. \$29.95

Teaching children about the Holocaust is never easy. It's obviously not a pleasant topic. One always considers how to teach about the horrific and not horrify; how to warn about history's terrible tendency to repeat itself without terrifying listeners about the future. Arielle A. Aaron's, (aka Joy Summerlin-Glunt), *In the Presence of Butterflies* speaks to those concerns by providing answers to those very questions and providing methods and suggestions for materials to do so.

Butterflies documents the story of the original Butterfly Project planned and directed by South Carolina Social Studies teacher Eleanor Schiller. If you've had the pleasure of reading Ms. Aaron's previous work, *I Remember Singing*, you will remember Eleanor (Ellie) is the wife of Hugo Schiller whose Holocaust survival